



Interview: Mark Hamill

On Saturday, April 29th, we went out to a quiet restaurant near one of Southern California's more popular beaches. Over lunch, we interviewed Mark Hamill, with topics ranging from his feelings toward the other members of the cast, to his hopes for himself as an actor. Below are excerpts from that hour-and-a-half of conversation.

For the sake of space, "SW" will be used to denote questions and comments by the interviewers, and "MH" will denote answers and comments by Mark Hamill.

SW: Did you like the character of Luke?

MH: Very much. Getting the part and making the film are memories I'll have forever.

I admire Luke's sense of loyalty and adventure. I mean, I'm on a farm and I want to see what's over the horizon. "What am I missing out on?", basically. It's so brilliant of George Lucas, because I'm trying to figure out a way out of that humdrum, void kind of lifestyle, and boom! I buy two robots and one of them has a hologram in him.

It's a classic thing, and I'm thrilled at it.

SW: Do you see yourself as Luke?

MH: When I see the movie, I don't feel like it's really me. I see Luke Skywalker, and I'm embarrassed when he's naive. Like when Han Solo says, "Who's going to fly this thing, kid, you?", and I say, "You bet I could!" I find myself going, "Oh, don't be such a nerd!" But reacting like that is right in character, I guess.

SW: Do you think other people like him?

MH: Sure. The kids are going in and seeing a fantastic film, and by fantastic, I mean unworldly. They see Banthas. They see Jawas. They see Tusken Raiders. They see Darth Vader. There's just so much. And they see Luke. I think they feel comfortable with his character. He provides a nice balance, and fits in nicely with the others. I think George Lucas has created an ensemble that works together well.

SW: What do you think of your co-stars, Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher?

MH: We're sort of like a family. Carrie is like my little sister, and I'm Harrison's little brother.

Harrison is a serious actor, and a brilliant one. I'm surprised that he didn't get an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actor. He was just riveting, I think.

During the filming, I had such a crush on Carrie.

SW: Did you really?

MH: Oh, yeah. I really love her.



SW: I think Carrie is swell.

MH: She is. She's a wonderful girl, and I really fell in love with her. Not at first. At first I thought, "She's Debbie Reynolds' daughter. She's a movie star's kid." I didn't give her a fair appraisal.

Do I get the Princess in the next picture? Can I just hold hands with her?

SW: You got a kiss in the last picture.

MH: The Wookiee got a hug!

SW: You got two kisses. One on the cheek, for luck, just before the swing, and one before you got into your X-wing. And she hugged you when you got out of the X-wing. You got two kisses and a hug in the last picture.

MH: Whew! I guess I should count my blessings.

SW: How did you get the part of Luke Skywalker?

MH: A friend of mine named Robert Englund told me about the auditions. Robert's a wonderful actor. He shot Burt Reynolds and killed him at the end of *Hustle*. He punched out Kris Kristofferson in *A Star is Born*. And he shoved Charles Bronson down an elevator shaft in *St. Ives*.

SW: He sounds like a really anti-social character.

MH: He's a sweetheart, but his face gets him those kinds of parts. If I had that face, Robert Englund would be sitting here right now. That's how chancey this business is.

Anyway, I heard from Robert that there was a picture George Lucas was doing called *The Star Wars*. At that time it was called *The Star Wars*, instead of just *Star Wars*. Robert said he'd been out for it. Now a lot of actors will tell you about parts only after they've definitely lost them. "I was up for this part, and it's still being cast." That sort of thing. Robert's not like that. He's like me, fatalistic. We all go up for a part and someone's going to get it. So I asked him what it

STAR WARS

was like, and he said, "I don't know, I haven't seen the script. George Lucas and Brian De Palma are doing joint auditions. George is the little guy on the left who never talks." So I go, "Okay, I'll go out for it."

I asked him if it was like *2001*. Robert said that he thought it was probably like *Flash Gordon*. Now, I thought he was up for the part of Flash. He's older than me and blonde and all this, so I figured there was probably no part in it for me. But I like going to studios and watching them work, so I went out for it.

I went in on one interview, didn't see a script, didn't do anything. I just talked about myself. "Hi, I'm Mark Hamill. I have four sisters and two brothers. I grew up in Virginia and New York and Japan." They said, "Thank you," and I went away. This was in November of '75. In February of '76, I tested. The way I found out about the test was an envelope arrived in the mail, and there were six pages of dialogue and a note saying to be there Tuesday to test.

I had totally ruled the part out. I had thought George was unimpressed, and I went and tried out for *Apocalypse Now*. Fred Roos was the Casting Director, and he's very instinctive. I think he really helped me get the part. I think he pressured George to pick Carrie and Harrison and me. We were cast as an ensemble. There were two sets of three actors. We were never mixed and matched.

SW: What do you have coming up in the future?

MH: Well, I'm going on tour for three weeks to publicize my new picture, *Corvette Summer*. I really hope people will go out and see it, because I'm proud of it. The title makes it sound like one of those Drive-in, schlock-o movies, but it's not. It's a love story. A romantic character comedy about people, not cars. The studio changed the title, but as far as I'm concerned, you could call it *The Dog's Breakfast* and it would still be a good movie. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that people will go see it.

After that, I'm going to Tokyo for the opening of *Star Wars* at the end of June. Japan is the only country where *Star Wars* hasn't opened yet. I, personally, think it's a very Japanese movie. Very Samurai.

SW: Unquestionably. There are a lot of Samurai elements in it. The Force is very similar to a Samurai/Zen concept called No Mind. You don't think, you just feel and act. Your practicing with the remote was like that.

MH: And Darth Vader's costume, and his duel with Ben Kenobi are very Samurai. I'm really excited. The picture's going to be really big in Japan.

SW: What comes after that?

MH: After Japan, I'm going to Yugoslavia.

SW: You signed to do *The Big Red One*?

MH: I sure did. I read the script and I thought, "This is a good movie. This is a great World War II movie. I'd want to go see it."

It's a great World War II movie—hit the beach and throw the hand grenade. And Sam Fuller, the picture's

writer-director, is a man I respect.

After *Star Wars*, I thought I should wait around for another good movie, so good it would equal *Star Wars*, at least in intent. I've done a lot of television I'm embarrassed of, but that's because I was learning. I wanted to wait for another great picture, but I realized there's no Great American Novel waiting for me. I'm an actor and I should act. So I'm going to act in this movie. Not that I'm putting this movie down—I think it has great potential.

SW: I've heard that it's pretty good.

MH: The script is terrific.

SW: After Yugoslavia, *The Big Red One* moves to Israel for filming. doesn't it?

MH: Right.

SW: I'm not sure I'd want to film battle scenes in Israel at the moment.

MH: That's exactly what I was going to say. That is kind of scary. I would hope, and I imagine that if they have invested this much money and time that they wouldn't let their actors get killed.

SW: I heard a report on the news recently, about you and a little boy in the hospital.

MH: I heard about that much the same way you did. Let me tell you the whole story from my point of view.

I got a phone call from my manager who said, "There's a young boy in the hospital, paralyzed with spinal meningitis. The first time he's moved in a long time is when he heard a television commercial for a *Star Wars*-related toy coming from the television set mounted in his hospital room. His father called Twentieth Century-Fox, and Fox called me. "Do you want to call him?" I said, "Of course!" So my manager gave me the number and set up a time for me to call when the boy would be near a phone.

Normally, I don't say I'm Luke Skywalker. I try to keep my identity separate from that of the film character, but in this case, I made an exception.

I called, and the boy answered, "Hello." And I said, "Hi! It's Luke Skywalker. How are you? What are you doing? Are you in the hospital? I heard that you're sick."

It wasn't "Oh, gosh, you're never going to walk again." It wasn't down. It was like, "Hey, what are you doing in the hospital? We need you. The Rebel Alliance needs you, we have to beat the Empire."

He said, "Luke? Where are you?" And I said, "I'm here in your galaxy for just a little bit. We just stopped off to regroup our forces." He got so thrilled and excited, he went, "I knew it was you, I knew it was you." He just went crazy. Then I said, "I have to go. Han is not going to stay around too long, and Chewie is real crabby today."

So then the boy said, "He is? Why?" I told him, "Well, I don't know. He fell asleep last night before he got fed, and he's angry at Han."

It was like he was right there, in the galaxy far, far away. I never talked differently from that, and I never broke the mood. I said, "If I'm back in your galaxy,

STAR WARS

"I'd love to take you to see the movie." And he said, "Okay, bye Luke," and then he hung up.

I called him and I hung up, and that was the end of it, as far as I was concerned. I was just trying to do something nice.

It wasn't a big publicity stunt or anything. But the boy's making amazing progress, so it got on the news.

It apparently gave the boy new hope. He believed in it enough that it helped him. The doctors said that any kind of positive reinforcement like that is good.

I called again last Wednesday, but he wasn't available. The hospital said I should call him on Sunday. I want to tell him that "I want to take you to a movie. I'm going to be out of the galaxy for three months." What I'm telling him is that it's going to be his Christmas present this Christmas.

SW: That's great!

MH: I think so. What small thing can I give? Nine hundred technicians made me look like a hero and now I can use that. I can't make a glass rise up off of this table, but at least I can help this boy.

SW: That's terrific. By the way, I've got this pain in my back. I was hoping you could make it go away . . . Would you like us to do another interview with Mark Hamill? To learn how he felt working in the desert of Tunisia; working with an actor of Sir Alec Guinness's stature; working with George Lucas? If so, write and tell us.

Is there some other member of the cast or crew you'd like to see interviewed? Write and tell us. Address your requests to Interviews; c/o Star Wars Fan Club; PO Box 1000; Beverly Hills CA 90213.

Q & A

In each issue of the newsletter, we'll try to answer some of the most-often-asked questions about *Star Wars*. If you have any questions that you'd like to have answered, send them to Q & A; c/o Star Wars Fan Club; PO Box 1000; Beverly Hills CA 90213. We don't have room to answer all of the questions we receive, but we'll answer as many as we can. Please be sure to put "Q & A" on the outside of your envelope.

How old is Chewbacca, the Wookiee? Some sources say he's one hundred years old, others say he's two hundred.

According to George Lucas and Gary Kurtz, Chewbacca is two hundred years old. Some editions of the novel version of *Star Wars* contain a misprint that states Chewie's age as one hundred, but that is incorrect.

Is *Star Wars* represented in any wax museums?

As of right now, *Star Wars* isn't represented in any wax museums. There have been some inquiries from wax museums about the possibility of including characters from *Star Wars* in their collections, but no arrangements have been made yet. Should any arrangements be made, we'll announce here in the newsletter.

What was the Sandcrawler, and was it full size or a miniature?

The Sandcrawler was a giant mobile home. The Jawas live in it, travel in it, and use it to transport their ill-gotten merchandise.

The Sandcrawler existed in two forms, one a miniature version, the other full-sized. The miniature version, which was only about one foot tall, had motors in it that enabled it to move. Only the bottom half of the full-sized version was built, but that half alone was two stories tall.



The Sandcrawler was brought to life by Special Production and Mechanical Effects Supervisor John Stears, using pulsating steam effects. According to Stears, "I could only imagine steam being the prime moving medium for a vehicle of its size, whether being proton or nuclear powered. I had in mind the magnificent sight of a Canadian Pacific Steam Locomotive, standing still but oozing power—ready to be released at a moment's notice. A living hunk of machinery."

The Jawas seen getting into the Sandcrawler included an English midget; a French-Tunisian midget; five Tunisian children; the son of one of the production company's English truck drivers; and Producer Gary Kurtz's two daughters, Melissa and Tiffany.

One scene, showing the Jawas carrying R2-D2 towards the Sandcrawler, had to be re-shot, due to problems with the film. That was done in Death Valley, California, using children of the local Park Rangers as the Jawas.

What happened to Obi-wan Kenobi?

Last issue we answered this question with the reply that all would be explained in the sequel to *Star Wars*. This time, we'll explain how he was made to disappear.

Darth Vader's slicing through Ben Kenobi was achieved by replacing Alec Guinness with an empty cloak that was shaped to resemble his cloak. The cloak was set up so that as Darth Vader's Light Saber hit the cloak, an electronically-detonated charge cut the cloak in two. The bottom half fell a split-second before the top, to show what was supposed to have happened.

STAR WARS

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Is the book, *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, the story that will be used for the sequel to *Star Wars*?

Splinter of the Mind's Eye will not be the story for the sequel to *Star Wars*. That book and others, as well as the comic book and comic strips, are the works of other people, based on, and inspired by the characters and stories created by George Lucas. The sequel will be based directly on the second of twelve stories George Lucas wrote in the *Adventures of Luke Skywalker*.

That's all the questions and answers for this issue. Next issue, more questions and more answers. The information provided in this column is not based on rumors or presumptions, but is garnered from the people actually involved in the making of *Star Wars*.

Between the Script and the Projector, part 2 (continued from last issue)

In March of 1976, a film production unit and cast descended on Tozeur, a small, quiet oasis town in southern Tunisia, where North Africa and Arabia meet and the Sahara Desert begins. The construction crew worked for eight weeks, turning the desert and towns into another planet. Filming began on a salt lake of the Chotte el Djerid, not too far from Tozeur. Other locations included the Tunisian desert a few miles outside of Nefta, and the rocky grandeur of a great volcanic canyon outside of Tozeur.

During the first week of filming, a sandstorm began blowing in the desert, and the entire crew had to wear specially supplied goggles. The cameras had to be rigorously cleaned out every evening after the day's shooting, to be useable for the next day. This kept the crew up long hours.

The cast and crew moved to Matmata, one of the most unusual towns in the world. Matmata is largely inhabited by troglodytes, people who make their homes in caves cut from the sides of crater-like holes in the ground. These underground homes evolved as a means of protection from sandstorms and the weather, which is scorching hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter. Interior sequences of Luke Skywalker's home were filmed in the depths of the Hotel Sidi Driss, which is typical, if larger, of the local Matmata dwelling. These dwellings consist of a central, open hole surrounded by cave-like rooms gouged out of the earth.

Following two and a half weeks of filming in Tunisia, the *Star Wars* cast and crew moved to the EMI Elstree Studios, just outside of London. It took all nine sound stages to house Production Designer John Barry's thirty sets of other planets, spaceships, caves, control rooms, the cantina, and the vast network of sinister corridors of the Death Star. For the Rebel hanger



sequence, filled with a squadron of X-wing and Y-wing fighters, the set was so enormous it had to be filmed on the largest sound stage in Europe. This was located at Shepperton Studios in Middlesex, England, twenty miles from the EMI Elstree Studios. The scenes with the actors took fourteen and a half weeks to film in England.

For the post-production work, George Lucas and Gary Kurtz worked out of Industrial Light & Magic in Los Angeles, where the special effects were completed. The editing was done in Marin County, outside of San Francisco.

Additional Tatooine desert footage was photographed in California's Death Valley. The Yavin Jungle was filmed in the Mayan ruins of Tikal National Park in Guatemala.

Noted composer John Williams spent a year preparing his ideas for the score. During March of 1977, he conducted the eighty-seven piece London Symphony Orchestra in a series of fourteen sessions, in order to record the ninety minutes of original music.

Original sound effects for the various alien languages, vehicles, robots, and weapons were created and collected by Ben Burtt, in charge of Special Dialogue and Sound Effects for *Star Wars*.

The final, elaborate stereo sound track was mixed at the Samuel Goldwyn Studios in Hollywood. They used the Dolby System for extraneous-noise reduction, to give the ultimate in motion picture high fidelity in the theater.

And after that was all done, and all put together, and after all the publicity went out, *Star Wars* was finally ready to be seen in theaters.



STAR WARS FAN CLUB
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